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OCI No. 4511
Copy No. 17CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
8 July 1953CIA BERLIN ANALYSIS OF
UPRISING IN EAST GERMANY

1. East zone uprising, spontaneous movement launched by working population with other segments populace following suit. Small scale beginnings on 16 June possibly winked at by regime, but evidence lacking.

2. People's police intervention during initial period sporadic, half hearted, successful where backed Soviet military might. Early Soviet intervention prompted by correct appraisal situation rapidly getting out of control, and reflected lack reliance upon People's Police.

3. Potentially revolutionary situation brought about by number of factors which, singly or combined, if added to prevalent dislike of regime, may have prompted outbreak:

- a. Implementation of economic program second SED conference resulting in drastic reduction living standards, with 10% norm raise merely last straw. Concomitant stepping up repression resulting large scale exodus from zone, aggravating food shortages and lack consumer goods.
- b. Deep-rooted hatred against SED functionaries, managerial bureaucracy and organs repression (SSD, People's Police etc).
- c. New SED Politbureau course announced 9 June affording just enough respite for uprising get underway. Encouraged strikes and riots because workers felt repressive measures would not be too harsh under new line. Also: Didn't SED ask for "criticism from below"? Since 9 June SED confused. Functionaries didn't know how to interpret course for workers, so workers did it for themselves. Buildup of resistance that SED had striven prevent by past policy incessant propaganda, continuous tightening economic screws, increasing terror, disenfranchisement populace, thus came to pass.

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4. Whereas spontaneity large-scale uprising unquestionable, local uprising in some instances said to have shown remarkable degree organization, suggesting ad hoc leadership by experienced tacticians and good mass discipline. Pattern in most uprisings: a. word of East Berlin strike; b. declaration of solidarity; c. strikes; d. Marches against main concentrations oppressors: SED headquarters, city halls, jails, SSD and VOPO installations, and other official buildings.

5. Our surmise shop stewards and revolutionary tradition German trade union movement played a vital role. Soviet "new" methods were affront to pride German laborer in his work and upset traditionally accepted pattern organization within German working class. Communist indoctrination harping on themes such as 1917 Soviet uprising and analyzing reasons defeat German Workers' Movement 1933 and prior thereto backfired.

6. Notion disproved that uprising "from above," presupposing split Communist leadership, is the only type uprising conceivable in Communist police state. This clearly uprising from below, not controlled by any SED leadership faction.

7. Soviet propaganda loath concede "uprising from below" theory or admit rift Communist leadership. Dogmatic quandary and imperative necessity forestall similar developments Satellite Orbit forces Soviet leaders insist uprising neither from below or above, but engineered from outside exploiting "justified grievances."

8. US propaganda should spare no effort plug uprising from below theme, which has following ramifications:

- a. SED demonstrably kept in power only by Soviet bayonets;
- b. SED regime imposed from above, not only devoid support workers it claims represent, but in actual fact serves as instrument their oppression;
- c. Soviet troops, "protectors of workers' paradise," shot down workers;
- d. Communism not "progressive" but reactionary in that it repressed "revolution" which it claims to foster.
- e. Where does all this leave Communist Trade Union Movement (FDGC)?

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9. Thorough investigation warranted, whether Soviet capabilities East Germany may conceivably have been depreciated to point where Soviets themselves question present security of East Germany as base for offensive against Western Europe and doubt IRS security as communications zone once attack launched. Breakdown KVP morale under stress major war all but certain. Doubtful KVP could be entrusted maintain order behind advancing Soviet armies.

10. If the 9 June SED course of action is implemented, as indicated by Grotewohl on 21 June, the East German quest for economic self-sufficiency, premised on build-up heavy industry at expense consumer goods production, in effect has been scrapped. This bound to shift weight of importance from industrial proletariat to farmers and consumer goods producers entailing serious weakening SED influence in its role as vanguard industrial proletariat. This in turn tends weaken Soviet hold over east zone populace.

11. In view manifest hostile psychological climate toward Communist system, eastern Germany may become less attractive to USSR as OPS base Soviet efforts penetrate and subvert democratic system of West Germany. Appeal Communist system to West Germans, which never too strong, reduced to vanishing point.

12. Unity theme as presented by USSR no longer potent drawing card. The SPD contention that uprising represent indication their "unity before integration." Policy in our opinion not borne out by facts. However, this contention may carry weight with West German sectorate.

13. Unlikely now SED will ever muster popular support on mass scale. SED may in the long run be reduced to little more than cadre party. Predictions wholesale reorganization east zone regime in offing, with SED phasing out and bourgeois parties taking over, highly wishful and premature. However, not incompatible with bringing bourgeois parties more to the fore, giving them ostensible role in government.

14. Within SED anticipate broadening "democratic" base in line Pravda articles which decried waning party influence at expense few distinguished leaders continuously in public limelight. Ulbricht's future position appears uncertain, but his continued influence believed assured in light current DDR press comments albeit presumably confined to preview SED secretary general. Not unlikely remnants former SPD leadership and particularly trade union elements will be assigned more prominent role.

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15. Although uprisings critically damaged prestige SED regime, Soviets' only logical choice is attempt maintain SED in pre-eminent position, even at price growing unpopularity. SED will have to vindicate itself. Soviets may be forced to deviate from new course by some concessions as in mass arrests in order attempt restore authority leadership.

16. New SED Politbureau course (generally associated with appointment Semeonov) will not undergo major changes as immediate result uprising. Tactical detours should be recognized as such.

17. Our estimate, Soviets will strive by all means their disposal restore normalcy in east zone by time any four-power conference proposed. If proposed today, USSR would have to forego favorite strategy of requesting presence indigenous Satellites, i.e., SED representatives.

18. Soviets, preparing for remote contingency that they may have to concede German unity on Western terms will maintain within DDR bourgeois parties covert nuclei Communist control, but long range prospects success this maneuver not too bright. Bourgeois parties will continue receive artificial respiration.

19. Spontaneity uprising not detracting from essential role played by West Berlin, symbol free society, offering sanctuary to persecuted, secure base allied and German information and cold war agencies. Uprisings vindicate US and British policy hold on to Berlin even at risk World War III and tribute to foresightedness those who persisted keeping alive resistance spirit east zone populace by all methods short of direct intervention.

20. Though essentially a laborers' uprising SPD not entitled to equate itself with East German labor nor claim more than due share of credit with other resistance organizations, such as Kampfgruppe, Free Jurists and others. By admission SPD east zone experts SPD's foreign policy not understood and backed by rank and file its sympathizers on east zone particularly on rearmament issue.

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